

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A discard information processing apparatus, comprising:
a discard unit, the discard unit including:
a processor;
a scanner coupled to the processor, the scanner configured to scan a code on items deposited in the discard unit;
a network interface coupled to the processor, the network interface configured to transmit and receive information over a network;
a database storing information related to the discard unit's contents, and profile information associated with a user of the discard unit; and
a remote processing system configured to be coupled to the discard unit via the network, the remote processing system including:
a first instruction stored in computer readable memory configured to receive at least a portion of the stored information from the database, wherein the received information provides an indication as to when at least a first item is to be replenished;
a second instruction stored in computer readable memory configured to provide at least a portion of the received information to at least a first supplier so that the first supplier can predict inventory needs.
2. The apparatus as defined in Claim 1, wherein the profile includes a delivery preference.
3. The apparatus as defined in Claim 1, wherein the profile includes a shipping preference.
4. The apparatus as defined in Claim 1, wherein the profile includes an order trigger.
5. The apparatus as defined in Claim 1, wherein the profile includes a supplier preference.
6. The apparatus as defined in Claim 1, wherein the first supplier is at least one of a retailer, a wholesaler, and a delivery service entity.

7. The apparatus as defined in Claim 1, wherein the information provided to at the at least first supplier does not uniquely identify the user.

8. The apparatus as defined in Claim 1, wherein the information provided to at the at least first supplier is aggregated with information for other users.

9. A method of providing information useable to predict inventories, comprising:
receiving over a network information related to a least a first networked discard unit's contents and a profile, including a least one of a delivery and a shipping preference, associated with a user of the first discard unit; and
providing over a network at least a portion of the received information to at least a first entity so that the first entity can predict inventory needs.

10. The method as defined in Claim 9, wherein the profile includes a supplier preference.

11. The method as defined in Claim 9, wherein the first entity is at least one of a retailer, a wholesaler, and a delivery service entity.

12. A method of allocating orders, comprising:
receiving over a network order information for a plurality of users' orders, wherein at least a portion of the order information is based on information scanned from disposed of items;
accessing from a computer accessible memory first pricing information based at least in part on the order information;
automatically grouping a portion of the orders into a first group based on at least a first characteristic;
setting a maximum acceptable bid price based at least in part on the first pricing information;
receiving over the network quotes from suppliers for the first group of orders;
selecting at least one supplier based on the quotes; and
placing the first group of orders with the selected supplier.

13. The method as defined in Claim 12, wherein the first characteristic is requested delivery date.

14. The method as defined in Claim 12, wherein the first characteristic is order date.

15. The method as defined in Claim 12, wherein the first characteristic is commonality of ordered items.

16. The method as defined in Claim 12, wherein the first characteristic is geographical location.

17. The method as defined in Claim 12, wherein a discount from the selected supplier is applied proportionally to the first group of orders.

18. An apparatus configured to allocate orders, comprising:

- a network interface configured to be coupled to a plurality of waste disposal units;

- a processor coupled to the network interface;

- a first instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to receive content information from the plurality of waste disposal units;

- a second instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to generate user orders based at least in part on the content information;

- a third instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to group a portion of the orders into a first group based on at least a first characteristic;

- a fourth instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to process quotes from suppliers for the first group of orders; and

- a fifth instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to select at least one supplier based on the quotes.

19. The apparatus as defined in Claim 18, further comprising a sixth instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to place the first group of orders with the selected supplier.

20. The apparatus as defined in Claim 19, further comprising a seventh instruction, stored in processor accessible memory, configured to apply a discount from the selected supplier the first group of orders.

21. The apparatus as defined in Claim 18, wherein the first characteristic is requested delivery date.

22. The apparatus as defined in Claim 18, wherein the first characteristic is order date.

23. The apparatus as defined in Claim 18, wherein the first characteristic is commonality of ordered items.

24. The apparatus as defined in Claim 18, wherein the first characteristic is geographical location.